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ABSTRACT

Using a discrepancy model, this study contrasted the gratifications sought from television in general with the gratifications that respondents perceived they obtained, or would obtain, from public television (PTV). Information was gathered through telephone interviews of a random sample of heads of households, both viewers and nonviewers of public television, in Lexington, Kentucky. Data were gathered on the respondent's educational and income level, the number of children living at home, the number of televisions in the household, and what members of the household made the viewing decisions. Results indicate that the model predicted successfully the level of exposure to PTV content among respondents who made their own decisions concerning what programs to watch, but that the level of exposure was unrelated to the discrepancy measure among those who let others make the viewing decision. When each of eleven gratification items was considered separately, the model discriminated between viewers and nonviewers of PTV on eight of the items. The results also indicate the importance of social determinants regarding the viewing decision and perceptions of PTV content as predictors of PTV consumption. (HAI)

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USES AND GRATIFICATIONS AND EXPOSURE TO PUBLIC TELEVISION: A DISCREPANCY APPROACH

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USES AND GRATIFICATIONS AND EXPOSURE TO PUBLIC TELEVISION: A DISCREPANCY APPROACH

A necessary condition for scientific progress in any discipline seems to be the subjection of any theory or model, no matter how popular initially, to a period of rigorous criticism of its theoretical assumptions and predictive validity. Through this process the theory either undergoes revisions or is ultimately supplanted by a new model or theory. In mass communication research we have seen the old "hypodermic needle" model replaced by the more conservative but also more sophisticated "limited effects" model. While the latter model posits a more active audience role (e.g., through selective exposure) than its predecessor, it has been criticized for failing to recognize just how active audience members are in selecting media channels and content.

Much of the popularity of the burgeoning uses and gratifications approach is due to its emphasis on just this sort of activity. The basic assumption of this approach is that audience members are motivated in their selection of media channels and content types by various social and psychological needs. The need-related gratifications derived from media consumption thus should mediate any observed effects, including future exposure patterns.

The uses and gratifications approach, however, has itself been subjected recently to a strong tide of criticism. It has been condemned in certain quarters as "atheoretical," as being more a research strategy or heuristic orientation than a theory (Elliot, 1974; Weiss, 1976; Swanson, 1977). Swanson (1977) has outlined four serious conceptual problems of the approach; a vague conceptual

framework; lack of precision in major concepts; a confused explanatory apparatus; and a failure to consider audiences' perceptions of media content. In addition, the approach is said to inherit the tautological shortcomings of all functional theories (Elliot, 1974).

These are rather serious indictments of an approach adopted with such fervor by so many media researchers; however, the true test of any theory lies in its ability to explain (and therefore predict) certain phenomena. If the uses and gratifications approach can be shown to have substantially increased our understanding of media consumption patterns, media effects, or the relationships between the media and other social systems, then perhaps the criticisms have been somewhat premature, or at least overstated. As Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) have observed, a supposed major aim of uses and gratifications research "was to treat audience requirements as intervening variables in the study of traditional communication effects" (p. 28). Unfortunately, as Katz, et al. also note, "Despite this injunction, hardly any substantial empirical or theoretical effort has been devoted to connecting gratifications and effects" (p. 28). More recently, Lometti, Reeves, and Bybee (1977) have reviewed a "limited number" of empirical studies which have sought to make this connection. These studies (Blumler and McQuail, 1969; McLeod and Becker, 1974; McLeod, Becker, and Byrnes, 1974; Becker, 1976) have demonstrated ties between gratifications and exposure, political attitudes, political knowledge, and perceptions of salient issues. These investigations, though, are few in number and are concerned with only one media effects area -- political communication. While promising, these studies do not in themselves provide sufficient validation for

any uses and gratifications "theory." The majority of uses and gratifications studies still seem directed at assembling ever more sophisticated typologies of gratifications, without empirically addressing the crucial question of the relationships between these gratifications and antecedent and consequent variables.

Gratifications Sought vs. Gratifications Obtained

Such "relationship" or "theoretical" studies must inevitably confront still another nagging difficulty which has beset the uses and gratifications approach. As outlined by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), "In principle, a distinction may be drawn between a) expectations about content formed in advance of exposure and b) satisfactions subsequently secured from consumption of it. In practice, however, research workers have indiscriminately approached these phenomena from both ends." (p. 25). Greenberg (1974) has also distinguished between "gratifications sought "and" gratifications received," and argues that, with present methodologies, "one cannot distinguish whether the response obtained from the viewer of the medium, or a fan of some specific content, is an accurate statement of what he wanted, or what he thinks he got...no approach has so far dealt with the parallelism or discrepancy between what was sought and what was obtained" (p. 89).[1] More recently, Lometti, et al. (1977) also note that "the exact relationship between gratifications sought and actual gratifications has not been investigated. Do they become equivalent through some trial-and-error learning process, where over time one knows what to expect from a given channel and subsequently receives it?" (p. 337). While such equivalence may be established over the long run, initially the motivations which lead an individual to expose himself

to a particular medium or type of content may not always match the gratifications derived from this exposure. Any differences between the two may well determine whether such exposure is continued. As McGuire (1974) has observed in his essay on the relations between psychological motives and communication gratifications:

> People show clear and loyal preferences among equally accessible mass communications. Such characteristic persistence cannot be viewed as mere continuation of a chance habit, if we remember learning theory's fundamental law of effect that repetition does not stamp in a response unless there is reinforcement; without reinforcement, repeated exposure would have the opposite effect of extinguishing the habit (pp. 168-169).

The distinction between gratifications sought and obtained thus emerges as a crucial one in an area of central concern to the uses and gratifications approach--media consumption--and seems no less relevant to questions concerning the effects of such consumption. A model is therefore needed which takes into account this distinction for both explanatory and predictive purposes. One version of such a model is depicted below:

$$(1) \qquad E = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{|GS_i - GO_i|}{n}$$

where:

E = an exposure measure for some medium, program, content type, etc.

GS_i = a measure of the extent to which the ith gratification is sought.

GO_i = a measure of the extent to which the ith gratification is perceived to be obtained.

n = the number gratifications under consideration.

The model states that exposure (or consumption) is a function of the average absolute discrepancy between the gratifications which the audience member is seeking and the extent to which he perceives he is obtaining these gratifications. Following McGuire's learning theory reasoning we would expect that the smaller the average absolute discrepancy between GS and GO, the higher the observed exposure. The absolute value of the discrepancy is used because it is assumed that negative and positive discrepancies carry equal weight in determining exposure. The exact nature and number of gratifications employed in any given research situation is, of course, up to the researcher. Previous typological studies have yielded a wealth of measures from which to choose, although specific situations may call for the development of new typologies.

An essential difficulty, of course, is in developing measures which successfully differentiate between gratifications sought and received. If, as Lometti, et al. (1977) suggest, the two become inseparable over time then the problem may be insoluble in some instances. One such instance may be when we are dealing with a particular medium in general with which most individuals have a long history of exposure, such as "television" or "newspapers" But these are precisely the media which have been of most interest to uses and gratification researchers. Is it the case, then, that what would seem to be an important theoretical distinction has no practical value because of our inability to make the same distinction empirically?

Perhaps part of the problem is associated with the level of abstraction involved. If we attempt to obtain measures of gratifications sought and obtained from "television" (at the same level of abstraction), then the chances are

maximized that feedback processes will eventually result in a close match between the two sets of measures; however, by shifting the level of abstraction it should be possible to obtain meaningful and useful differences. For example, we might derive useful insights into why subscribers to a particular newspaper prefer their newspaper to a competing one by first measuring the gratifications which such subscribers seek from newspapers in general, and then comparing these to: 1) the gratifications which they perceive they are obtaining from their own newspaper, and; 2) the gratifications which they perceive they would obtain from the competing newspaper. Gratifications sought from a medium in general and those obtained from a specific component of that medium would be much less likely to converge toward isomorphism over time. Just because we enjoy reading "newspapers" does not mean that we must necessarily be satisfied with a particular paper.

We are still left, of course, with the problem of obtaining relatively "pure" measures of gratifications sought from the general medium of newspapers. Responses to an item such as "I read newspapers to keep up with current issues and events" undoubtedly contain some mixture of gratifications sought and obtained. Isolating the components of this mixture may not be possible with present methodologies; however, it appears safe to assume that gratifications sought at least partially determine responses to such an item. On the other hand, responses to an item such as "The Lexington Leader helps me to keep up with current issues and events" clearly should be determined principally by reader perceptions of gratifications obtained from the Leader. We therefore should be able to make valid comparisons between responses to the two types of measures.

This principle was applied in this study by comparing those gratifications which viewers said they were seeking from television in general with those they said they obtained (or perceived they would obtain) from viewing public television. The differences between these two sets of measures were then used in an attempt to predict exposure to public television.

Social Determinants of Exposure

Bogart (1965) has issued a caution to uses and gratifications researchers that external circumstances, such as work schedule, availability of certain television channels, and family circumstances, may be a more powerful determinant of media exposure than personal motivations. This may be particularly true in the case of television, due to the often highly social nature of the viewing decision. Especially in the case of one-set households, family members must arrive at often controversial decisions concerning who watches what at what time. Many are the households which have echoed to the sound and fury accompanying the choice between the fourth quarter of the pro football playoff game and The Wonderful World of Disney. Whether the final decision is democratic or authoritarian in nature, often someone's viewing needs are not being fully met. To the extent that an individual is denied, or willingly surrenders, his franchise regarding the viewing decision we would expect the impact of his own needs and sought gratifications on his viewing behavior to be commensurately diminished. This study investigated the effects of such social constraints on public television viewing, particularly their impact regarding the role of uses and gratifications on such viewing.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Telephone interviews were obtained in April, 1977, from a modified random sample of 526 heads of households in Lexington, Kentucky. A sex quota was imposed to ensure approximately equal numbers of males and females. A quota system was also devised to ensure approximately equal numbers of interviews from both viewers and nonviewers of public television. To be classified as a public television viewer a respondent had to indicate that he watched public television at least "from time to time," had watched at least one public television program "in the last month," and had to be able to name that program.

Measurement

Public Television Viewing. In addition to classifying respondents as "viewers" or "nonviewers" as described above, we asked respondents how often they watched programs on "KET" (Kentucky Educational Television--the local educational and public television network). Response categories were "very often," "often," "from time to time," "hardly ever," and "never."[2]

Uses and Gratifications. The gratification measures used were adapted from Greenberg's (1974) study of British children's television viewing. Items were selected from five of the eight factors isolated in the Greenberg study. The wording of the items was slightly modified to make them more applicable to adult respondents. One item ("I watch TV to become more informed about the arts") not included in Greenberg's Learning factor was added because of its hypothesized relevance to public television viewing. Finally, one item was added to tap communicatory utility ("I watch TV to give me things to talk about with other people"). The items used for both gratifications sought and

obtained are displayed in Table 1.

"Gratifications sought" from TV in general were measured in the following manner: "We are (also) interested in why people watch TV. Here are some reasons other people have given. As I read each reason, please tell me how much that reason applies to you. If the reason very definitely applies, give it a 5; if it does not apply at all, give it a 1; if it applies somewhere in between, give it a 2, 3, or 4, depending on how much it applies." The respondent then was read the list of 11 gratification sought (GS) items shown in Table 1.

The procedure for measuring gratifications obtained varied depending on whether the respondent had previously been classified as a "viewer" or "nonviewer" of public television. For viewers, immediately after gratifications sought had been measured, respondents were instructed: "Now we would like to know to what extent programs on KET provide you with some of the things we have just been talking about, when you get a chance to watch them."[3] Respondents then replied to the list of GO items in Table 1 using the same 5-point scale employed to measure GS.

Nonviewers were instructed: "Now we would like to know to what extent you think programs on KET might provide you with some of the things we have just been talking about if you had the time to watch more programs on KET." The wording of the GO items was altered slightly to reflect the hypothetical nature of the items (e.g., "Programs on KET would help me to relax). The item wording for nonviewers is shown in parentheses in Table 1.

It was hypothesized that, for each gratification item, the mean absolute difference between GS and GO would be less for viewers than for nonviewers.

Also, in terms of the discrepancy equation (Equation 1), it was hypothesized that the smaller the mean absolute GS-GO difference across all 11 items, the greater the level of exposure to public television.

The Viewing Decision. In an attempt to account for some of the social constraints which affect viewing, respondents were asked who in their household ordinarily makes the decision concerning what to watch during prime time hours Since children often may control the television set in the early evening hours, the viewing decision was determined for two time periods -- 7-9 p.m. and 9-11 p.m. Respondents were asked: "We are also interested in the process you and others in your household go through in deciding what programs to watch. In the evening, between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., who in your household usually decides what programs will be watched on the TV set that YOU ordinarily use? Do you usually decide, does your wife/husband usually decide, do your children usually decide, or who between 7 and 9 p.m.?" The person deciding was recorded, and if someone other than the respondent made the decision, the respondent was asked: "About how often does (do) (the decision maker) decide to watch programs on KET during this time period? Response categories were "very often," "often," "from time to time," "hardly ever," and "never." This sequence was repeated for the 9-11 p.m. period.

In line with our previous discussion, it was hypothesized that where someone other than the respondent was responsible for the viewing decision in either (or both) time period(s), the impact of gratifications sought and obtained on exposure to public television would be less than when the respondent was the sole decision maker. Also, where another person made the decision, it was

expected that this person's public television exposure would be the major predictor of the respondent's public television viewing.

Perceptions of Public Television. Uses and gratifications measures have also been criticized for being too "general" and "abstract" to be predictive. We therefore decided to investigate whether more specific perceptions of public television (particularly of PTV content) might be better predictors of PTV viewing than the gratification measures. We therefore asked members of the KET staff to generate a list of most often heard criticisms of KET. Eight of these were selected for use in a scale of PTV perceptions (see Table 2) Both viewers and nonviewers responded to each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Other Measures. Data were also gathered on respondents' educational and income levels, number of children living at home, and number of television sets in the household. As traditional predictors of PTV viewing, these measure provided necessary controls as well as benchmarks against which the effects of the gratification, decision-making, and perception variables could be compared.[4]

Results

Gratifications Sought and Obtained. The findings generally are in line with the hypothesized smaller mean absolute GS-GO discrepancy for viewers than for nonviewers. The viewer-nonviewer differences are statistically significant in the hypothesized direction in 7 of 11 comparisons, and approach conventional significance levels in an eighth case. For no gratification item is the discrepancy significantly greater for viewers than for nonviewers. Across all 11 items the average mean absolute discrepancy was .969 for viewers, and 1.170 for nonviewers (difference significant at .001). In accord with

expectations, then, comparing gratifications sought with those obtained does appear to successfully discriminate between viewers and nonviewers of public television.

Table 3 provides an item-by-item comparison of gratifications sought and obtained by viewers and nonviewers of public television. With regard to gratifications sought from television in general, viewers of PTV showed significantly stronger tendencies than nonviewers to view television to learn about people, places, and things and to be informed about the arts (Items 2, 4 in Table 3). Nonviewers, on the other hand, displayed a greater tendency than viewers to utilize television to pass the time (Item 8) and for companionship (Item 10). Interestingly, nonviewers did not show a greater inclination than viewers to use TV for "escape" purposes (Items 6, 7), or for entertainment (Item 11). Viewers and nonviewers also manifested equally strong seeking of information about current issues and events (Item 3). On four of the eleven items, though, significant viewer-nonviewer differences emerged.

More interesting are comparisons which take into account gratifications obtained. For example, although as expected viewers indicated a greater tendency than nonviewers to watch TV to become more "informed about the arts" (Item 4), both viewers and nonviewers indicated they were obtaining (would obtain) more of this information from PTV than they wanted. The GS-GO difference is larger, however, for nonviewers, as revealed by the raw GS and GO means and a comparison of the mean absolute discrepancies for viewers and nonviewers. We would expect, therefore, viewers to be relatively more satisfied with PTV content for this particular gratifitcation. both viewers and nonviewers also seemed to be finding(felt they would find)more

than they were seeking with regard to learning about people, places, and things (Item 2) and communicatory utility (Item 5). For the former item the GS-GO discrepancy was once again smaller for viewers than for nonviewers. The discrepancies, however, for communicatory utility were about the same for viewers and nonviewers.

Both viewers and nonviewers indicated they were getting (would get) less than they wanted from PTV with regard to relaxation (Item 1), forgetting of problems (Item 6), passing the time (Item 8), and companionship (Item 10). It is possible that PTV content is perceived as too intellectually challenging to adequately provide these rather "passive" gratifications. Except for "forgetting", though, the match between gratifications sought and obtained is once again closer for viewers than for nonviewers. This is also the case for "entertainment" (Item 11). Although there was no difference between viewers and nonviewers where the seeking of entertainment from TV in general is concerned, nonviewers do not appear to find PTV content as entertaining as do viewers.

The Viewing Decision. The data in Table 4 make clear that significant (and remarkably similar) percentages of both viewers and nonviewers do not consider themselves to be the primary decisionmakers concerning which programs to watch during prime time. This is particularly true during the period from 7 P.M. to 9 P.M., when children often control the set.[5] Depending on viewer-nonviewer classification and the time period involved, 18.7% to 37.9% of respondents said that they ordinarily were not the primary decisionmaker or were not involved in the viewing decision for a particular two-hour time slot. In general, more respondents viewed themselves as

decisionmakers in the 9-11 p.m. period than in the 7-9 p.m. slot, mainly due to the sharp decline in the influence of children after 9 p.m. When data for the two time periods are combined, 42% of viewers and 43% of nonviewers reported that someone else controlled the selection of television content during either or both periods. It is apparent from these figures that significant proportions of the television audience often do not consider themselves to be the primary determinants of their own viewing behavior. It may be inferred that many audience members often do not watch the type of content they might prefer in the absence of social constraints. It remains to be seen whether the presence of such constraints brings about the hypothesized reduction in the effects of intrapersonal factors (such as uses and gratifications) on PTV viewing behavior.

Determinants of PTV Viewing. Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the relative impact on PTV viewing of the mean absolute discrepancy measure, the decisionmaker's PTV viewing (where applicable), perceptions of Kentucky Educational Television, education, income, number of TV sets, and number of children in the household. The standardized partial regression coefficients (Beta weights) for these variables are shown in Table 5 for the entire sample and separately for decisionmakers and nondecisionmakers. Decisionmakers were defined as those who reported they made, or were involved in, the viewing decision during both the 7-9 p.m. and 9-11 p.m. periods. Nondecisionmakers were those who reported someone else making the decision during at least one of the prime time periods.

In the total sample, the discrepancy measure (β = -.14) emerges as the second strongest predictor of PTV viewing after the "perceptions of KET"

scale (β = -.35). However, the majority of this observed relationship is apparently due to the decisionmaker portion of the sample (where β = -.16). As hypothesized, the impact of the uses and gratifications measure is much weaker among nondecisionmakers (β = -.03). Here, as predicted, the strongest predictor of PTV viewing is the reported PTV viewing of the actual decisionmaker (β= .39).

At least two alternative causal interpretations might account for this latter result, however. First, it may be argued that the relationship is spurious; that similar background characteristics such as education, income level, family size, etc., lead to similar viewing patterns for members of the same household. The fact that controls for education, income, and number of children at home were included in the regression solution would seem to mitigate this argument. Second, it could be contended that a nondecisionmaking respondent's estimate of the actual decisionmaker's PTV viewing is in reality just another measure of the respondent's own behavior. If John always watches what Mary decides to watch, why shouldn't their respective viewing measures correlate highly, since they are in reality the same thing? In other words, it might be argued that any observed correlation is really a reliability coefficient. In response it should be noted that the respondent was asked"...who <u>usually</u> decides what programs will be watched...", not "who <u>always</u> decides." It is not anticipated that those classified here as nondecisionmakers have relinquished <u>total</u> control of their viewing to another person during the time periods involved, only that the respondent's viewing is <u>influenced</u> in varying degrees on different occasions by the "decisionmaker." Obviously it is likely that this influence

process is even reversed at times; however, to the extent that the respondent is accurate in his perceptions of the modal nature of the influence process, then the causal interpretation involved is fairly clear; i.e., the viewing choices of the "decisionmaker" influence and partially determine the viewing behavior of the "nondecisionmaker." This influence is over and above that exercised by motivations or personal content preferences.

Closely related to content preference is the "perceptions of KET" scale, which appears as a rather strong predictor of PTV viewing for both decisionmakers (β = -.36) and nondecisionmakers (β=-.31).[6] This scale is a considerably stronger predictor in fact, than the uses and gratifications measure Again, though, the effect of this "intrapersonal" measure is somewhat weaker when someone else usually makes the viewing decision.

Finally, with the exception of "number of children" in the decisionmaker sample, the traditional correlates of PTV viewing exhibit weak and nonsignificant effects when controls have been introduced for other variables.[7]

Discussion

The findings of this study appear to offer support for a discrepancy conceptualization of uses and gratifications. Taking into account the difference between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained successfully discriminates between viewers and nonviewers of public television, and, in the case of respondents who make their own television viewing decisions, provides a statistically significant indication of level of viewing. The uses and gratifications measure is, in fact, a better predictor of PTV viewing among decisionmakers than such traditional

demographic correlates as education, income, and number of children in the household. On the other hand, the discrepancy measure accounts for only a modest amount of variance (in any absolute sense) in PTV viewing levels. This may be a somewhat disconcerting finding for those seeking to validate a uses and gratifications approach to media consumption. Perhaps other factors are indeed more powerful than personal motivations in determining such consumption. We mentioned previously Bogart's (1965) caution that external factors (e.g., available delivery systems, work schedules, family circumstances) might play an overriding role. The finding in this study that social constraints on the viewing decision reduce the impact of gratification measures while at the same time playing an important predictive role tends to support this view.

In addition to such external forces, McGuire (1974) offers two other reasons to doubt "that audience motivation and gratification form any great part of the forces which determine media consumption" (p. 168). First, it may be argued that "the gratifications offered by the media are so paltry compared to the audience's real needs that the motivational factor could hardly loom large in determining exposure" (p. 168). Also, "it is argued that even where media gratifications are available, we would exaggerate the rationality of the audience and the indexing of the media to suppose that these gratifications could be efficiently found" (p. 168).

While McGuire offers persuasive arguments against all three of these reasons, the relatively modest predictive ability displayed in this study by uses and gratifications measures suggests that perhaps we should reconsider the impact of such forces. As we mentioned the external factor argument

is given credence here by the important role apparently played by the social nature of the viewing decision. With regard to the indexing argument, while McGuire (1974, p. 169) contends that "people do have some reasonable grasp of what functions might be served by exposure to one medium as compared to another," we found that one-third of (79 of 240) respondents classified as nonviewers of PTV expressed an inability to predict what gratifications might be derived from viewing public television content. To paraphrase the responses of several such individuals, they "don't watch it and don't know anything about it."

While many of these respondents may have just been manifesting a reluctance to express any sterotyped perceptions of PTV they may have held, it is likely that many were giving an accurate assessment of the situation; i.e., they simply lacked knowledge about the kinds of content available on PTV, and thus knowledge about the kinds of specific gratifications which might be derived from such content.

From a policy standpoint this suggests one major educational failure of "educational television." From a theoretical perspective this does not in itself eliminate the possibility that motivational considerations influence such individuals' decisions not to watch public television. To the contrary it may be precisely this lack of information concerning gratifications offered by PTV which leads such persons to stick to known sources of gratification attainment. Our research design, however, did not directly address this possibility.

There also appears to be some support in the data for the criticism that uses and gratifications measures are too abstract to provide meaningful

discriminations to respondents. The more specific KET perception scale was a much stronger predictor of PTV viewing than the discrepancy measure for both decisionmakers and nondecisionmakers. It is possible, of course, that the predictive utility of the uses and gratifications approach was mitigated in this study by the manner in which the approach was operationalized. It may be that some other typology of gratifications more specifically tailored to public television would have increased the discrepancy model's ability to account for PTV exposure. For example, Elliot (1974), in his critique of the uses and gratifications approach has noted that the social meaning given to the consumption of different types of media content may be a strong determinant of such consumption. According to Elliot, involvement in a particular type of media output becomes an important part of an individual's self concept, symbolizing his membership in particular groups or social echelons. This would appear especially relevant to public television, which many audience members may view to enhance or maintain their self images (both private and public) as relatively sophisticated connoisseurs of more "intellectual" media fare than the commercial networks provide. This social meaning concept seems amenable to a uses and gratifications formulation, in that the maintenance of one's self-image is certainly an important kind of gratification which most of us seek. Future investigations might do well to attempt to operationalize this concept in uses and gratification terms. The concept of "self-image", however, is also rather abstract, and it is difficult to visualize just how gratifications of this nature, or of any nature, for that matter, can be made more specific without rendering them

trival. For example, "I watch TV to see pro football games" is very specific, but of little general explanatory value.

All of the above explanations for the predictive validity problem are rather closely tied to theoretical considerations. Of a more purely methodological nature is the question of reliability. The Spearman-Brown coefficient for the 11-item mean absolute discrepancy measure was a rather modest .58. It is possible that reliability could be improved by the standard procedure of adding more items, and the various typological studies provide a wealth of items from which to choose. It should be noted, though, that the Spearman-Brown coefficient for the 8-item KET perception scale was .61, essentially the same as that for the discrepancy measure. Relative reliability, therefore, does not explain the rather large observed differences in the predictive abilities of the two variables.

This discussion of predictive shortcomings, however, should not obscure the considerable evidence on the positive side of the ledger. We should emphasize that the uses and gratifications measure was a better predictor of PTV viewing among decisionmakers than a number of traditional demographic correlates. We should also recall that when the eleven gratification items were considered individually, the mean absolute discrepancy between gratifications sought and obtained was significantly smaller for viewers than for nonviewers in most cases, and in no case was the discrepancy smaller for nonviewers. This item by item ability to discriminate between viewers and nonviewers is perhaps the most impressive validational support offered by the data for the uses and gratifications approach, particularly for an approach which considers both gratifications sought and obtained. Apparently viewers and nonviewers

do have differing perceptions of the extent to which the gratifications they are seeking from television in general are (would be) provided by public television in particular. In the functional logic of the uses and gratifications perspective we may assume that this difference in perception is one factor leading to different levels of consumption. There are, of course, other determinants, a number of which we have discussed. Perhaps the most accurate conclusion that might be drawn from this study is that it offers a certain amount of validational support for the uses and gratifications approach, not as an alternative explanatory apparatus for media consumption patterns, but as complementary to a host of other determining factors such as media availability, work schedules, and social constraints. The major task facing media researchers is not to develop a "uses and gratifications theory," per se, but to integrate the roles played by gratifications and other factors into a general theory of media consumption.

NOTES

1. One recent study considered the discrepancy between gratifications sought and obtained. McLeod, Bybee, Durall, and Ziemke (1977) measured both the gratifications respondents said they were seeking from the 1976 Presidential debates and "debate helpfulness" in providing these gratifications. The discrepancies thus obtained were used in a descriptive manner, however, and were not tied directly to theoretical concerns.

2. Data were also gathered on the number of hours per month respondents viewed KET. This measure, however, proved unreliable.

3. The wording, "when you get a chance to watch them" was added in an attempt to reduce any tendency for respondents to answer in terms of how frequently they watched KET.

4. See Bower (1973), and "A fresh look at the PTV viewer," Corporation for Public Broadcasting's Focus on Research, Feb. 2, 1976. Farr (1976), however, has criticized certain methodological aspects of the latter study.

5. For married respondents (who constituted approximately 74% of both viewers and nonviewers), the figures for children were substantially higher than those shown in Table 4 for the entire sample. 21.4% of married viewers and 23.4% of married nonviewers said that children controlled the set between 7 P.M. and 9 P.M. In general, figures are not presented separately for married and unmarried respondents since the focus here is on the total proportions of viewers and nonviewers who perceive that someone else in the household is responsible for viewing decisions during prime time.

6. Beta weights are negative since the PTV perception scale was negatively weighted. High scale scores indicated negative perceptions of PTV.

7. The results of the regression analysis were corroborated for the most part by the results of a discriminant analysis which attempted to classify respondents as viewers or nonviewers. The discriminant analysis, employing the same independent variables as the regression analysis, successfully classified 69% of the decisionmakers and 68% of nondecisionmakers. As in the regression analysis, the uses and gratifications measure was a significant predictor only for decisionmakers. The KET perception scale was the strongest predictor for both decisionmakers and nondecisionmakers, although for nondecisionmakers the reported decisionmaker's PTV viewing was close behind. Unlike the regression analysis, education and income were significant predictors in the discriminant analysis, although not as strong as the KET perception scale, the decisionmakers' viewing measure or the uses and gratifications index.

TABLE 1

Items for Gratifications Sought (GS) and Gratifications Obtained (GO)*

Relaxation

1. GS. I watch TV because it helps me to relax.
   GO. Programs on KET (would) help me to relax.

Learning About Things

2. GS. I watch TV to learn about people, places, and things.
   GO. Programs on KET (would) help me to learn about people, places, and things.

3. GS. I watch TV to keep up with current issues and events.
   GO. Programs on KET (would) help me to keep up with current issues and events.

4. GS. I watch TV to become more informed about the arts.
   GO. Programs on KET (would) help me to become more informed about the arts.

Communicatory Utility

5. GS. I watch TV to give me things to talk about with other people.
   GO. Programs on KET (would) give me things to talk about with other people.

To Forget

6. GS. I watch TV because it helps me forget my problems.
   GO. Programs on KET (would) help me forget my problems.

7. GS. I watch TV when I want to get away from things.
   GO. Programs on KET (would) help me to get away from things.

To Pass Time

8. GS. I watch TV because it helps pass the time.
   GO. Programs on KET (would) help pass the time.

9. GS. I watch TV when I'm bored.
   GO. Programs on KET (would) help to relieve boredom.

Companionship

10. GS. I watch TV because it makes me feel less lonely when no one else is around.
    GO. Programs on KET (would help) make me feel less lonely when no one else is around.

Entertainment

11. GS. I watch TV to be entertained.
    GO. Programs on KET entertain me (would be entertaining).

*Wording of GO items for nonviewers shown in parentheses.

TABLE 2

Perceptions of Public Television: Scale Items

1. KET programs are too intellectual.
2. KET programs are dull.
3. KET programs are too educational.
4. Some KET programs are hard to follow.
5. KET is a waste of taxpayers' money.
6. KET is a good alternative to commercial television.
7. The programs on KET generally are not as well made as commercial network programs.
8. KET features too many foreign films.

TABLE 3

Mean Gratifications Sought (GS) and Obtained (GO) and Mean Absolute Discrepancies: Viewers vs. Nonviewers of Public Television *

Gratification		Viewers (n=276)		Nonviewers (n=141)**
1. helps to relax	GS:	3.23	(n.s.)	3.21
		(.001)		(.002)
	GO:	2.83	(n.s.)	2.72
mean abs. Disc:		1.12	(.04)	1.34
2. learn about people, etc.	GS:	3.72	(.005)	3.33
		(.001)		(.001)
	GO:	4.41	(.005)	4.09
mean abs. Disc:		.98	(.02)	1.25
3. Keep up with current issues	GS:	4.12	(n.s.)	4.20
		(.01)		(n.s.)
	GO:	3.93	(n.s.)	4.03
mean abs. Disc:		.77	(n.s.)	.77
4. Informed about the arts	GS:	3.19	(.001)	2.51
		(.001)		(.001)
	GO:	4.08	(.01)	3.74
mean abs. Disc:		1.05	(.001)	1.52
5. things to talk about	GS:	2.16	(n.s.)	2.08
		(.001)		(.001)
	GO:	3.30	(.05)	3.02
mean abs. Disc:		1.46	(n.s.)	1.47

*Significance levels (by t-test) for differences between means shown in parentheses between means being compared (n.s.: $p > .10$). All tests are two-tailed, except those involving mean absolute discrepancies, where directional predictions made one-tailed tests appropriate.

** The n for nonviewers was reduced to 141 because 79 nonviewers said they simply did not know enough about PTV programs to answer the gratifications obtained items.

Table 3 continued...

Gratification		Viewers (n=276)		Nonviewers (n=141)
6. forget my problems	GS:	1.95 (.04)	(n. s.)	2.14 (.07)
	GO:	1.79	(n. s.)	1.94
mean abs.	Disc:	.77	(n. s.)	.68
7. get away from things	GS:	2.04 (.08)	(n. s.)	1.96 (.02)
	GO:	2.17	(n. s.)	2.26
mean abs.	Disc:	.77	(.08)	.93
8. pass the time	GS:	2.69 (.001)	(.001)	3.25 (.001)
	GO:	2.28	(.05)	2.57
mean abs.	Disc:	1.06	(.002)	1.43
9. Relieve boredom	GS:	2.70 (n. s.)	(n. s.)	2.77 (n. s.)
	GO:	2.70	(n. s.)	2.70
mean abs.	Disc:	1.04	(.01)	1.33
10. Feel less lonely	GS:	2.37 (.001)	(.003)	2.85 (.001)
	GO:	1.97	(.05)	2.26
mean abs.	Disc:	.78	(.05)	.99
11. to be entertained	GS:	4.07 (n. s.)	(n. s.)	4.12 (.06)
	GO:	4.14	(.01)	3.86
mean abs.	Disc:	.85	(.003)	1.17

TABLE 4

Viewing Decision During Prime Time
for Viewers and Nonviewers of PTV

	VIEWERS		NONVIEWERS	
Decisionmaker	7-9 P.M.	9-11 P.M.	7-9 P.M.	9-11 P.M.
Respondent	39.3%	52.2%	43.0%	55.3%
Joint decision involving R	22.8%	29.1%	21.5%	16.8%
Spouse	18.2%	16.2%	15.2%	19.5%
Children	15.8%	1.1%	17.3%	4.9%
Joint decision excluding R	1.8%	0.0%	1.3%	1.8%
Other	2.1%	1.4%	1.7%	1.7%
	100.0% (n=285)*	100.0% (n=278)*	100.0% (n=237)*	100.0% (n=226)*

*Sample sizes for different time periods differ slightly due to missing data.

TABLE 5

Beta Weights for Various Predictors of PTV Viewing for Total Sample and for Decisionmakers and Nondecisionmakers

Variable	Total Sample (n=391)[1]	Decision-makers (n=220)	Nondecision-makers (n=171)
Average Mean Abs. Disc. (All Items)	-.14**	-.16**	-.03
PTV Viewing of other Decisionmaker	____	____	.39**
Perceptions of KET	-.35**	-.36**	-.31**
Education	.09	.11	.06
Income	.00	-.02	.06
Number of Children in Household	.09*	.14*	.07
Number of TV sets	.01	.02	.01
	R^2=.18	R^2=.20	R^2=.30

*p <.05
**p <.01

[1] Total sample size was reduced because 79 nonviewers said they could not answer the gratifications obtained items, and 65 nonviewers said they could not respond to the scale dealing with perceptions of KET.

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